

We are Baptist

Priesthood of the Believer

1 Peter 2:5-9 *Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:*

Revelation 1:5-6 *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

Isaiah 61:6 *But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.*

Introduction

The Priesthood of the Believer asserts that all Christians have access to God through Christ, the true high priest, and thus do not need a priestly mediator. Once a person accepts Jesus Christ, they are now called a priest.

This session will include the role of Priests in the Old Testament, how those roles are now available for the believer, and what this means for your every-day life.

Understanding these biblical truths will encourage the believer to approach the throne of grace with boldness as we understand what Christ has done and who we are because of Him. This doctrine also reminds us of another distinct difference between Baptists and the Catholic church. We can be thankful that we need no other mediator than Christ to have fellowship with God!

I. The Role of Priests in the Old Testament

Exodus 28:1 *And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons.*

- A. Priests were the **mediators** between God and man.
 - 1. They prayed for you.
 - 2. They sacrificed for you.
 - 3. They served for you.
 - 4. They praised God and worshipped Him continually for the nation.
 - 5. They represented God to the people.
 - 6. They mediated on behalf of others.
- B. God set up the priesthood, the **Levites**, to make sure that His people worshipped Him continually and properly.
- C. The early priesthood was a **picture** of what Jesus Christ does for us as our High Priest.

I Timothy 2:5 *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;*

Hebrews 7:25-28 *Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.*

- 1. When Jesus came and died on the cross, He became our High Priest.
- 2. Peter says that we are the priests now and don't need to go through another priest to reach God. We have access through Jesus Christ.

II. We are Priests before God

Revelation 1:5-6 *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and **priests unto God** and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

1 Peter 2:5-9 *Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, **to offer up spiritual sacrifices**, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that **ye should shew forth the praises of him** who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:*

“For Baptists, being our own priests means that we are responsible only to God. We are not accountable to another person, to a creed or confession, to a council or convention, or to any text other than Scripture. Our only sovereign is God. No other authority comes between us and God. We are accountable for being guided by God’s Spirit.” (Carolyn D. Blevins)

A. The Bible now calls all believers **priests**.

“As Christianity grew over the centuries, the hierarchical role of priests began to reassert itself. A special priesthood, rather than a universal priesthood, became the approved way for people to reach God. Priests once more became the approved way for people to reach God. Sometimes, the church erroneously insisted that the people had access to God only through the special priesthood.” (Carolyn D. Blevins)

1. **Revelation** calls us kings and priests
2. 1 Peter calls us a **royal priesthood**
3. When you accept Jesus Christ, you are now considered a priest.

- B. We are not reliant or obligated to go through anyone to get access to the throne of God. We have access through Jesus Christ our High Priest!

I Timothy 2:5 *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;*

1. Our only **mediator** is Jesus Christ.
2. We do not need a man (priest) to talk to Jesus. This is why we reject the structure of the Catholic or universal church because it is contrary to the doctrine of the Word of God.

III. The Practical Applications of being a Priest

- A. Every believer has direct **access** to God through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 7:25-28)

1. We can **boldly** go before His throne and seek His help at any time.

Hebrews 4:14-16 *Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

2. We should go to Him for our **forgiveness of sins**. 1 John 1:9

- B. Every believer is **equal** under God.

Galatians 3:28 *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*

1. I am responsible for my **personal relationship** with Jesus Christ!

“The personal relationship with God is his grace to us. Because each believer has a personal relationship with God, believers work together in the community of church as brothers and sisters, not as masters and servants.” (E. Y. Mullins)

2. Every believer has a **different function** in the church, but all are equal under God. No one is better or lesser in God’s house.
3. This is why we have a congregational structure of leadership. The local body of believers **governs** itself and elect leaders to lead, not to demand!
 - a. The office of the pastor and deacon are important positions, but they do not make the men in those positions greater than other believers before God. They just have more accountability! Yes, we should respect our leaders and follow them, as they follow Jesus Christ. The priesthood of the believer does not negate our responsibility to submit to leadership, instead it raises our responsibility and accountability before the Lord. Regardless of whether we have a good pastor or deacons, we are to follow God and serve Him!
 - b. This is why everyone needs to be involved and do their part, but you have an individual accountability to God and your brothers and sisters in Christ. Not by constraint, but by spiritual birth right. You are a priest!

C. Every priestly believer is **accountable** to understand Scripture

John 16:13 *Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.*

2 Timothy 2:15 *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

1. Every believer possesses the Holy Spirit of God and can understand the **Scriptures himself!**
2. We are accountable for our relationship with Jesus Christ as well as our **spiritual growth.**

3. Christians are accountable to God for **living out the Scriptures** but are not accountable to any confession of faith written by humans. Scripture is complete and needs no addendum. (Texas Baptists doctrinal statement)

D. Every priest is accountable to **serve God**.

- This is not the job of the pastors. The responsibility of praising God and sharing our faith is for every priest!
 1. We are to **praise** Him (1 Peter 2:9)
 2. We are to **share His love with others**.
- Priests help others find God. We do not save them, but we talk about God and because we live out our faith, the lost will want to accept our High Priest as their priest! We are His representatives.

2 Corinthians 5:20 *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

3. We work together as a **community** of priests.

“A local church is merely the launching pad for priests. Much of the work of priests is done outside of the church walls. Priests are priests everywhere, wherever their daily lives take them. Priests are intentional about going to minister in the places where they are needed. How tragic it would be if believers huddled within the church walls all the time, using the church as their cocoon sheltering them from the needs of their community. All believers are priests in two ways. Being a priest is an individual commitment and a community commitment. For an individual, priesthood is personal. It is about a person’s relationship with God. No person can interfere with that relationship. Every individual must keep an up-to-date relationship with God through Bible study, prayer, and personal commitment. Being a priest is also a community endeavor. Priests need to worship together, plan together, work together, support one another, and participate in the business of their church. Believers must commit themselves to minister through the community of priests. Community nurtures the individuals for ministry. In community, people work together, not alone. In community, individuals work as equals realizing the strength of combining personal gifts of

ministry. We work as individual priests through a community of priests.” (Carolyn D. Blevins)

“Each believer is a priest, both before God for oneself and by caring for fellow believers and for persons in the world for whom Christ died.” (James Leo Garrett Jr.)

IV. Conclusion

- A. As a believer of Jesus Christ, I am a **priest** of the living God!
- B. As a priest, I have direct **access to God** at any time.
- C. As a priest, I have an **accountability to God** for my growth and service. This means I cannot cast blame on anyone for my spiritual condition.
- D. As a priest, I have an accountability to **share my faith** with others. I **represent** Jesus Christ to others, and I am accountable for my actions.

*“In summary, believers are called "kings and priests" and a "royal priesthood" as a reflection of their privileged status as heirs to the kingdom of the Almighty God and of the Lamb. Because of this privileged closeness with God, no other earthly mediator is necessary. Second, believers are called priests because salvation is not merely “fire insurance,” escape from hell. Rather, believers are called by God to serve Him by offering up spiritual sacrifices, i.e., being a people zealous for good works. As priests of the living God, we are all to give praise to the One who has given us the great gift of His Son’s sacrifice on our behalf, and in response, to share this wonderful grace with others.”
(gotquestions.org)*